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Christian Liberty Asserted:

IN A
SERMON
PREACH'D
ON

Sunday July the 22d, 1716.

AT THE
Parish Church of St. *Mildred*
Breadstreet.

BY
The Reverend Mr. ROBERT PATTEN.

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SERMON PREACHED

at the Anniversary

of the Society

for the Propagation of the Gospel

in Foreign Parts

at the Anniversary

of the Society

for the Propagation of the Gospel



T H E
P R E F A C E.

THIS Sermon was, at the earnest Request of some Friends Preach'd, and by their Importunities is now made Publick: They had heard that I was reflected on by some, whose Aim and Study it is to render me odious for the small Services I have endeavour'd to do the Government; and from whom, I find, I am to expect the bitterest Calumnies their Malice can suggest, because I timely saw my Error, in being concern'd with Those whose Principles are Inconsistent with the Interest of the *Church of England,*

and the *Protestant Succession*, in which consists, these Nations, Safety, Liberty, and Happiness. The Discourse, as it is, is the same *Verbatim*, deliver'd from the Pulpit; the Dress is mean, but the Intention real, to demonstrate my sincere Repentance, for being so deeply concern'd and active in the late Rebellion; and I shall still study to demonstrate my Loyalty and Gratitude, to that Merciful Prince, my Royal Sovereign, who has Graciously given me my Life on such easy Conditions, the remainder of which I shall be faithfully devoted to His Service.

Robert Patten.

G A L. V. 1.

*Stand fast therefore in the Liberty
wherewith Christ has made us free,
and be not entangled again with the
Yoke of Bondage.*

THAT which gave the
Apostle cause of using
these Words, will e-
vidently appear from
the foregoing Chapter,
where, by Arguments full of Reason,
he sets forth the true Christian Liber-
ty, in being deliver'd from the burden
of the *Mosaic* Law, and enjoying that
Freedom which he Preached unto them,
for which some were zealously affected:
But upon the account of his Absence,
or some other motives, they grew re-
mifs in that Affection, and seem wil-
ling to go back into their former course
of living; but to those that had not
been byassed, he addresses himself in
these

these Words, *Stand fast therefore in the Liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.* As if he had said, Will you again labour under all the Burden and Charge of the Ceremonial Law? Have you such an esteem for Circumcision which is painful, as to prefer it to a pure and contrite Heart which is all serene and peaceful! Would you repeat the daily sacrificing of Bulls, Kids, Doves, Lambs, &c. which is chargeable, to the daily works of Mercy and Love which are more acceptable! Will you delight your selves in the outward forms of Washing and Fasting, by neither of which the Soul has any Advantage, rather than make the inner Man of the Heart clean from all Worldly Lusts and Appetites, having your Minds pure and fix'd by the Birth of the *Messiah*, by the Preaching of Christ, by his Oblation of himself! These things are done away, these things are declar'd against, these things are fulfilled; therefore stand fast in your Duty, be not like your forefathers the *Jews*, who being brought out of the Land of *Egypt* by a powerful hand, having seen the Wonders of the Lord in di-

dividing the *Red Sea*, and destroying the Host of *Pharoah*, in leading them by a Cloud by Day, and Fire by Night; in Raining Food from Heaven to satisfy their hunger; yet after all these signal Deliverances, and miraculous Supports, to desire to return to the Flesh-pots of *Egypt*, and tamely submit to the severity of their Task-masters, than to go to a Land flowing with every thing the Heart can desire in full plenty! Yet so frail is human Nature, that it seems to have a tendency and propensity to Affect those Things, to Live in those Places, and Converse with those People with whom in their younger Years they have contracted a Familiarity; never considering the Improvement that may be made by a farther search after more valuable Possessions, and more Faithful Friends. Thus we see some so strangely possessed with the Course of a mean sordid Life, that they have not the least thought of making their Days more Comfortable; thus we see some so strongly possessed with some early Prejudices in their Judgments, that no Arguments can induce a Change;
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you may Convince them by the force of Reason, but be wanting to Convert them : These same Difficulties seem to have had a great share of Mens Minds in those early Times of the Gospel ; for the People to whom it was Preached were rivited in their former Superstition, the *Jew* as well as the *Gentile*, which too often gave occasion to their unwillingness to become Christians, and as often prevail'd with them to Revolt : For a Religion that seems to gratify the Senses has still the popular Applause ; whereas the Christian Religion which was Ordain'd by God, the nature of its Doctrine was such, as was almost impossible to escape the Frowns and Displeasure of Men ; a Doctrine it was that called Men off from Lusts and Pleasures, and offered violence to their native Inclinations ; that required the greatest strictness and severity of Life, obliged Men to deny themselves, to take up their Cross and to follow the steps of a poor Crucified Saviour, and that upon little other encouragement at present, than the Invisible Rewards of another World ; it revealed and brought

brought to light such Truths as were not only contrary to the Principles of Mens Education, but many of them above the reach of Natural Comprehension, too deep for the Line of Human Reason to fathom or find out.

Upon these and such like Accounts, Christianity was sure to encounter with mighty Prejudices, and potent Oppositions ; and so it did : For no sooner did it make its first Appearance, but it was every where spoken against ; Princes and Potentates, Powers and Policies, for some Ages, did confederate and combine to extirpate and banish it out of the World ; and certainly, if Arms and Armies, if Strength and Subtilty, if Malice and Cruelty, could have stifled it, it had been smothered in its Infancy and first Delivery into the World ; but notwithstanding all these Oppositions, it still lifted up its Head in triumph, and outbraved the fiercest Storms of Persecution : So true is that, *The Blood of the Saints was the Seed of the Church.* A strict Observation of these Laws which Christianity prescribes, will still enliven the Christian to undergo all

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that

that Envy can invent, or Malice suggest. Let us therefore consider what this Christian Liberty is, wherewith Christ has made us free.

It consists in being delivered from that Darkness which clouded the Minds of Men before the Light of the Gospel was deliver'd abroad, and it is visible by the Fruits of the Spirit, which are Love, Joy, Peace, Long suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance, against such there is no Law, v. 22, and 23, in the exercise of which, a Man will find that Comfort and Satisfaction, as will give Contradiction to all that say, that Christianity lays any harsh Severities on his Nature; but otherwise, that no Man can enjoy himself and the Things of this World with that Complacency as the Christian does, for he is discharged the Practice of all such Things and Actions as are disagreeable, or are not sociable; he is forbid all Feuds and Quarrels, not to revenge himself, but to give place unto Wrath, to let all Bitterness and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking, be put away from us, with all Malice; to be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even

even as Christ forgave us. These are the Laws of Christianity; which when ever they are duly entertain'd, produce the most gentle and good natur'd Principles, the most innocent and quiet Carriage. This visibly appeared in the Life of our Saviour, who was the most incomparable Instance of Kindness and Civility, of Peace and Quietness; we never hear him treat any with Sharpness and Severity, but the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, who were a Pack of surly, malicious, ill-natur'd Fellows, and could be wrought upon by no other Method. Of such there are too many yet in the world, especially this Age, whom Favours and Kindnesses, Protection and Liberty cannot gain to be tractable and obedient to the Laws of the Church; these Men are for turning the Mirtle Tree into a Bryar, and the Dove into a Vulture: Of such take care. Let your Gravity, Sincerity, Modesty, and Holiness of Life, so conquer all Oppositions, that none dare bespatter it; for no Religion has more Truth, is more useful and powerfully just than this, which renders Men Meek, Speakers of Truth, Modest, Chast, Charitable, Kind and Helpful to

all, as if most nearly related to us, and indeed this is the genuine and natural Tendency of the Christian Doctrine, which it cannot but effect, where ever it is kindly embraced and entertained ; for no Christian can be a bad Man, unless he be a Hypocrite ; there is a vast Difference betwixt the Crime and the Name, the Opinion and the Truth, for they are not all Christians that are called so, but cheat others by the Presence of a Name ; which brings me to consider the latter part of my Text, *Be not entangled again with the Yoke of Bondage* : That is, give not your selves up to be led into those Corruptions of Nature, those Errors in Doctrine and Faith, which formerly had too great Interest in the Church ; for a Life conformable to the Doctrine of Christianity, as you may now enjoy it in the Church, will set you at Liberty, out of Danger of ever returning into ancient Errors, or complying with modern ones ; for if you return to the old, or encline to the new, both are alike destructive, and have proved so to this Church and Nation ; but as the Apostle speaks in the 10th Verse of this Chapter, *I have Con-*
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fidence in you that you will be now otherwise inclined ; but he that troubleth you shall hear his Judgment whosoever he be.

Consider therefore the established Religion of the Church of *England* to be in Doctrine the same that our Saviour taught, the same preached by the Apostles, and confirmed by the first Five General Councils, till such time when some aspiring Minds could not live peaceably under the Civil Government, unless that was likewise part of their Trust, and then to make the greater shew, to add to their Ambition, Pomp ; to their Avarice, Riches ; to their Government, large Dominions ; they basely contrived that the Christian Religion should be subservient to all their Ends, Plots and Ambition, and so of that pure and unspotted Spouse of Christ, they dressed an Idol suitable to promote their Interest, and to answer all their Ends in Lust and Ambition : They made her a Prostitute to all, and in short so loaded her with new Inventions, and robb'd her of her Beauty, that very little was left but the Name ; for her Doctrine was not to be found
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in the Practice, neither of Priest nor People: But at last the Burthen of such Avarice, under such specious Pretences as those Impostures used, was at length discovered to be Fraud and Cheat; for Wealth was the Thing aimed at, by which the Agents might be able to support in strength one to defend them; an universal Monarch. The Intention being visible, and the Plot discovered, People began to enquire after the Good Old Way, to search after Liberty, which got footing in this Land under the Kindness of its Princes; then the sacred Oracles of Truth were allowed to be read by People of all sorts, having for many Generations been lock'd up in an unknown Tongue, hearing no more of them than what were applied to support blind Superstition, these being read by all, it was soon thought adviseable to banish the old Superstition, and to set up Church Communion, which was carried on so in this Nation, as no other People could ever yet bespatter; for all the Steps in our Reformation were carried on by a legal Power, until it was formed into what it now is, the most agreeable to the Primitive Constitution
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of any National Church in the World ; retaining no old Superstitions, nor taking in any new Human Inventions ; keeping exactly to the Apostles Rule, that all Things might be done according to Decency and Order. As she then is the most Orthodox, why should any desire to return to be entangled again with the Yoke of Bondage ? Why should any desire to see so pure and regular a Constitution brought under a Cloud, or made the Prey of a watchful Enemy ? But as there is little fear of ever returning into so gross Superstition, if her Members will stand fast in their Liberty ; so there is as much Caution to be used against an Enemy nearer home, nearer in her Principles, but as distant as the other in her Practices : So Orthodox are they in that, so far do they agree, that their Emulation consists in the Churches Destruction. How sensible every one may be of this, let them consult our Historians, and they may see how the Malice of the one was carried on with Fire and Faggot in Queen *Mary's* Reign, against all the Members of the Church of *England* ; and how sensibly Churchmen felt the
Hands

Hands of the other, may be read in the History of the late unhappy and unnatural Rebellion. God Almighty complains, that he was Forty Years grieved with the Generation of the *Jews*, that they were a People that did err in their Heart, and would not know his Ways; but if the Council of the Almighty could be had, it may be said, that he was more grieved with that Generation than any that went before them, or God forbid should follow them; these are fresh Instances of our bosom Enemies, and I shall not continue a relation, and wish I could have in silence passed that over, and so shall endeavour to make such Inferences from what has been said, that I may encourage you to stand fast in your Liberty, to be strong, and to quit you like Men, and *not be entangled again with the Yoke of Bondage.*

The most powerful Preservative to secure you in your Christian Liberty, publickly to enjoy the inestimable blessing of performing all the Duties of your Religion, is to pay that duti-
ful

ful Obedience and Subjection to the Governing Power, who under Christ is the Supreme, and by that Authority committed to him, secures your Liberty, by Patronizing your Performances, and with the Sword defends the Church against all her Enemies; in this, to Obey is better than to Sacrifice, and how far others be deficient in their Duty and Allegiance, by the abuse of that Liberty granted purely to protect tender Consciences in the Exercise of their way of Worship, is to be no precedent for you; for if they shadow other Designs under this umbrage, and take too much upon them, they discover themselves unworthy such Favours, which was intended to Tolerate, not to Legitimate; for how gay and plausible this Act of Toleration may appear to them, yet still it does not justify any of their Errors; but is rather design'd out of tender Compassion and fatherly Care, to heal the Breaches, and to Seal the Differences among us, and strictly to unite us in Church Communion. How far this Act is frustrated in its Aim and Design, is visible in two particulars:

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In some it is apparent that their Reaches are over-reaches, when they make the Name and Act subservient to support and to preserve a Party, not out of any Religious Design, but some secret in State, and by securing a Party to their Interest, with strange Prepossessions and plausible Pretences, carry on the Division, and make on it with Words, Libels and other Actions, a very deep Wound, which at sometimes looks seemingly heal'd and skin'd over, when the Innocent Party least apprehends, dangerously breaks out into an Infected Gangrene not to be healed without desperate Applications. The other Party that abuse this Liberty, are such whom in Charity we call Dissenting Brethren, who really upon some early Mistakes occasion'd by Education, have contracted such Scruples in Mind, as obliges them to rest dissatisfied with some of our Ceremonies with which they cannot comply. If it be really thus with any, they may soon be overcome and prevail'd with, when the real Designs of retaining Ceremonies is out of no respect to old Superstition, or of being fond of Novelties, but that they

they are design'd for certain Emblems to promote Decency, and to advance Piety, and may be changed according as Nations and Provinces think agreeable to the Word of God, Christian Simplicity, and the Constitution of State, which when once established are not to be chang'd according as they will suit this Age, or this Humour, but retain'd to keep up constant Rules; if those thus possessed abuse their Liberty under the Civil Magistrate, by an obstinate resistance, and barefac'd opposition to the Established Church, they forfeit the title to the Umbrage and Shelter of that tender Act, and are to be avoided, prayed for, and pitied; and with neither of these are we to comply, but to stand fast.

Likewise Brethren, if we would regard the Words of my Text, we ought carefully to watch against all the Insinuations of Crafty Men, whose Words are smooth and gay, whose Reasonings are cover'd over with such plausible Pretences, as too often gain Credit with the unlearned Crowd, with those that are related to them,

or have any dependance upon them, and so gain them to their Party and Interest, and make them return with them, with the sincerest of their Endeavours, to be *entangled with the Yoke of Bondage.*

This has been too visible in the late unnatural Rebellion against our Sovereign King *George*, in which I was too deeply concern'd, and am ashamed to think of the Part I acted therein: But since I am sincerely convinced of my Error and Guilt, I am not ashamed to Confess it, and design to apply my Life which my Sovereign has Graciously given me, to caution and forewarn others never to be *entangled again with the Yoke of Bondage*; never to give credit to the Surmises, the Alarms, the false Accusations, and unjust Imputations, that make Men swerve from their Duty to God, and Allegiance to their King. The Consequence is legible in the Ruin of many poor and distress'd Families; it is only for those that delight in Blood, and *Nero* like, account the Flames that consume their Neighbour's House nothing but a merry Bonfire, to have
such

such Melancholly and Tragical Parts acted. Right thinking, mature and timely deliberation, will prevent the growth of Faction, and will inform the Mind with the dire CONSEQUENCES that ATTEND the Yoke of Bondage. Arbitrary Power under a Popish Prince; have we not fresh Instances thereof? May not the Case and Condition of a Neighbouring Nation, which now labours under that Yoke, be an example of Power and Force to prevail with Us to stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ has made us free? to enjoy the Comforts of this Life peaceably, and to secure those of another quietly; having the free Exercise of our Religion secure, by the Faith of One whose Principles oblige him to keep Sacred whatever he solemnly Promises; having none of that Principle instilled into him, that Faith, Oaths and Promises, are not to be kept with Hereticks, of which we of the Church of *England* are accounted the worst by those of the Church of *Rome*, and therefore matters of such great moment, as the enjoyment of our Church Discipline, and our Liberties and Properties, are not to be put into the

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the Hands and Power of such who make no scruple to betray us, and bereave us of both when opportunity serves. Late Experience is fresh in our memories; *so be not entangled again with the Yoke of Bondage.*

Lastly Brethern, That you may enjoy the Blessings promised in the Gospel to all those that discharge their incumbent Duty, study to lay aside all Faction and Animosities, all Feuds and Innatur'd Distinctions of Parties, by a voluntary complying in Love and Unity, Brotherly Love and Charity, the shining Characters of our Holy Religion; so that we may strictly unite to value all the Comforts and Blessings which the Almighty pours down upon our private Necessities as well as publick Wants, and not by our strivings provoke him to Wrath; for our abuse of Favours justly call for a scourge: And thus we betray our selves, when we contend about empty Titles and Distinctions contrived by an Enemy that studies our Ruin, by dividing us, that so our Hands being made feeble, they may get the Command over us,
and

and *entangle us with the Yoke of Bondage*. Let Tears and Prayers be poured out, that we may regain the spouse of Christ, that Divine Virtue of Charity which seems to have fled Christians Breasts and Churches; Let us seek Her till we find Her, whose healing Qualities will reconcile all our Differences, and heal all our Breaches, and so make us a happy People, under the benign influences of an indulgent Parent: Let it therefore be our joynt and sincere endeavours to obtain that which will Crown all our Days with Peace and Tranquility, that we may enjoy the *Liberty wherewith Christ has made us free*, and let us not again be *entangled wit the Yoke of Bondage*. Which God of his Infinite Goodness grant all of us may sincerely do to the good of our own Souls, and the setting forth of God's Glory. To God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, &c.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

P Age 1, Line 14, for *seem*, read *seem'd*; p. 2, l. 24³ for *so true is that*, r. *so true it is that*; p. 10, l. 16³ for *that*, r. *who*; l. 28, for *us*, r. *him*.

and entangle with the Lake of Bondage.
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